

CENTRAL SOUTH QUARTERLY NEWS ROUND-UP

HSCCA:
PRIORITIES ACROSS THE
REGION

BUSINESS FIRST:
BUILDING THE WORKFORCE
FOR GROWTH

IN MY VIEW:
JODI FAIR

SUMMER IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH



NHS UPDATE

BUILDING THE WORKFORCE
OF THE FUTURE

SAILGP RETURNS TO
PORTSMOUTH

A word or two from the Editor



Welcome to the latest edition of our quarterly news round-up.

Summer is well and truly here and having survived the recent sweltering temperatures, we hope you will take the time to sit back and enjoy our latest offering.

This edition is brimming with excellent content covering everything from the latest news from our combined county authority to an update from Sharon Collins and Patrick Fowler on the campaign to unlock key-worker housing across our region.

With so much media focus on the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training, we wanted to share the thoughts of Jodi Fair, Regional Economic Growth and Partnership Manager at Solent Growth Partnership. Her thought provoking article can be found on pages 15-18 (You can also read our report on page 3 from the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Central South, where Becky Tinsley, Deputy Director for Local Statistics and Analysis at the ONS, presented the Central South Deprivation Report). Our cover image is from the immensely popular SailGP event which makes a dramatic return to Portsmouth in July and we've got the latest news from the event.

If you would like your story to feature in a forthcoming edition of the news round-up, please ensure you are sharing your latest media releases with us.

Kate Pearce

KATE PEARCE

HEAD OF STRATEGY

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

CENTRAL SOUTH MEETING & EGM



The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Central South met at Westminster, where Richard Quigley MP (Isle of Wight West) was formally appointed as Chair following the EGM.

The meeting brought together MPs from across the Central South, alongside business leaders and local councillors and highlighted the need for a collaborative action plan to address NEETS (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) in the region.



Richard Quigley MP for Isle of Wight West and Chair of the APPG for the Central South

We heard from Fran Collins, CEO of Red Funnel, on how targeted projects can deliver positive outcomes for communities and Dr. John Flackett (AiLab) explored how greater adoption of AI across the Central South could play a vital role in driving future economic growth and prosperity.

A key focus was the Areas of Deprivation Report, commissioned by Business South and prepared by the Office for National Statistics.

Business South Group CEO Leigh-Sara Timberlake spoke about the Deprivation Report on BBC Politics South. [View on LinkedIn HERE](#)



IS THE CENTRAL SOUTH THE PICTURE OF PROSPERITY WE ALL ASSUME?

One in six neighbourhoods in the Central South are in the most deprived 30% of neighbourhoods nationally, new analysis, using the recently published English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2025, has revealed.

The findings for the deprivation report commissioned by Business South and prepared by the Office for National Statistics were presented by Becky Tinsley, Deputy Director for Local Statistics and Analysis at the ONS, to regional MPs and business leaders at the All-Party Parliamentary Group on June 10th at Portcullis House.

Deprivation Analysis Central South

ONS Local
ONS.Local.South@ons.gov.uk

April 2026

Download the full report on the Business South website [HERE](#)

Central South is defined as encompassing Chichester in the east and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole in the west as well as all of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with a total population figure of 2.7m.

Read more about the Deprivation Analysis findings [HERE](#)

HSCCA FORMALLY ESTABLISHED FOLLOWING PARLIAMETARY APPROVAL



THE FORMAL CREATION OF THE NEW AUTHORITY MARKS AN IMPORTANT AND LONG AWAITED STEP FORWARD FOR OUR REGION.

The establishment of the HSCCA represents an important step forward in the devolution of powers and funding from central government, ensuring that decisions about the region are made closer to the people they affect.

The HSCCA will enable a more collaborative approach to public investment and delivery, supporting councils, public bodies, businesses and investors to work together at scale on shared economic and social priorities, and to maximise the region's collective strengths.

Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Nick Adams-King, said: "The formal creation of the new Authority marks an important and long awaited step forward for our region. Our work together now begins in earnest, giving us the opportunity to make decisions that really reflect what people need, and invest in the long-term prosperity and wellbeing of communities across our area."

A MAJOR MILESTONE IN THE CREATION OF A NEW AUTHORITY TO LEAD STRATEGIC DECISION- MAKING ACROSS THE REGION.



The Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority (HSCCA) has been formally established following parliamentary approval of the statutory instrument, marking a major milestone in the creation of a new authority to lead strategic decision-making across the region.

The new authority will provide a strong foundation for greater local leadership on priorities including transport, housing, skills, investment and economic growth. It will help unlock opportunities for stronger coordination across partners and deliver improved long-term outcomes for communities and businesses across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.



LOOKING FORWARD

HSCCA WILL NOW BEGIN ESTABLISHING AN ORGANISATION THAT WILL DELIVER ON ITS PRIORITIES ACROSS THE REGION

Councillor Jonathan Bacon, Leader of the Isle of Wight Council, said: "The establishment of the Combined County Authority is an important development for the region. It provides a framework for councils and partners to work more closely together on shared priorities such as transport, skills and economic development. I aim to ensure that issues relating to the Island's connectivity to the mainland are a particular focus given the importance of that issue to the vast majority of residents. For the Isle of Wight, it is important that we continue to work collaboratively to ensure the Island's needs are understood and reflected as the new authority moves into delivery."



WE'RE READY TO WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE DEVOLUTION

Portsmouth City Council Leader Cllr Steve Pitt said: "Now the new Combined County Authority is up and running we can begin to make local decisions for our region that will bring real benefit and opportunities to communities and businesses right across Hampshire and the Solent. We're ready to work together to ensure devolution is a success and delivers for residents and our local economy."



Dr Ruth Adams, Chief Executive of HSCCA

Southampton City Council Leader Cllr Sarah Bogle stated: "This is a major step forward for our regional economy and Southampton as a key driver of growth. We have great potential and by working together we can unlock new investment, support local businesses to grow, and ensure our residents have access to the skills, opportunities and housing they need to thrive. Underpinned locally by our landmark Growth and Prosperity Plan, this is about creating the right conditions for sustainable growth, strengthening opportunities across our communities, attracting and developing businesses, and making Hampshire and the Solent an even better place to live, work and invest."



WE ARE AMBITIOUS ABOUT WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE

Dr Ruth Adams, Chief Executive of HSCCA, said: "This is a significant moment for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. I want to thank everyone who has worked so collaboratively to reach this point. The creation of the Combined County Authority gives us a real opportunity to bring regional leaders together, attract investment and accelerate progress on the issues that matter most to local people and businesses. We are ambitious about what we can achieve and are now focused on turning that ambition into action."

HSCCA will now begin establishing an organisation that will deliver on its priorities across the region, building on the strong foundations already in place to realise the full benefits of devolution. This marks the next step for the HSCCA, moving from legal establishment to delivery. At its inaugural meeting, expected to be held in July, the new authority will establish itself as an operating organisation, adopting its Constitution and Local Assurance Framework, the governance that sets out its role, its decision-making and how it will work with partners across the region on its areas of competence.

For more information on the new Authority, visit [HSCCA](https://www.hscca.org.uk)

BURNHAM IS BACK. WHAT HAPPENS TO LABOUR NOW?

RETURNING TO PARLIAMENT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN NINE YEARS.

LABOUR LEADERSHIP INSIGHT SERIES:
WE BRING CAVENDISH'S POLITICAL ANALYSIS TO YOUR
TEAM

The Labour leadership is now a live issue – what happens next, and what it means for business.

Andy Burnham is the leading candidate for the Labour Party Leadership, having been endorsed by former Health Secretary, Wes Streeting. Sir Keir Starmer has announced his resignation as Prime Minister, and nominations for a leadership contest are set to open soon.

As of now, no other candidates have publicly announced their intention to run for the leadership position. But what happens next, and what will it mean for business? Follow the latest leadership news by Cavendish > [Cavendish Labour Leadership Insight Series.](#)

ANDY BURNHAM

Twice a leadership candidate, Mayor of Greater Manchester since 2017, with experience in government before that, and consistently the party's and the public's preferred successor to Starmer. His appeal is breadth: he claims to reach the voters Labour has lost to Reform and the Greens, he is trusted by the soft left, and he carries real union weight.

Where he stands: public ownership of essentials, maximum devolution, a National Care Service, and bold borrowing to build. His platform is "Manchesterism".

- **The agenda arrives before the man.** This is the part that matters, even if Burnham never reaches Number 10. His platform – "Manchesterism" – is already reshaping Labour's debate, and the soft-left network behind it is ascendant regardless of the result. It names specific sectors and sets out to change the terms on which they operate: increased scrutiny of tech, greater public control of energy, the sharpest exposure of all in water, bus and rail franchising in transport, a for-profit care model it wants to dismantle, and around £40bn of borrowing to build. **Any organisation in or near those sectors is already inside the policy, whether it has noticed or not.**



Andy Burnham, MP for Makerfield



Andy Burnham and Leigh-Sara Timberlake at MIPIM 2026

Keep updated with the latest
Labour Leadership News
[HERE](#)

REGENERATE CENTRAL SOUTH 2026

ANNUAL CONFERENCE



**FOCUSING ON INWARD
INVESTMENT
OPPORTUNITIES, SUPPLY
CHAIN, AND HOUSING.**



The conversation continued with inward investment updates from local authority leaders across the region. The panel was hosted by Meg Carter, Regional Director at AtkinsRéalis.



The afternoon programme then focused on housing, with Lucian Cook, Head of UK Residential Research at Savills, setting the scene with the latest housing data before leading a panel discussion on how we can deliver the homes our region needs.

Thank you to all our partners, speakers and delegates.

The conference video can be viewed [HERE](#).

Central South – Accelerating Regional Growth

We were delighted to welcome more than 150 delegates to St Mary's Stadium in Southampton for the Regenerate Central South 2026 Annual Conference.

Discussions focused on crucial themes, including housing and inward investment across the Central South region.

Delegates were welcomed by Gavin Hall of Savills and Business South Group CEO Leigh-Sara Timberlake.

Morning highlights included a fascinating panel discussion titled: "Regional Case Study – In Conversation", featuring Wayne Hemingway MBE and Andy Ferrier, CEO of Test Valley Borough Council. The session explores the Andover Master Plan, providing an update on unlocking funding opportunities and strengthening collaborative working.



NHS UPDATE

UNLOCKING KEY WORKER HOUSING ACROSS HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT

SHARRON COLLINS
SPECIALISES IN
COLLABORATIVE
SOLUTIONS BETWEEN
HEALTH, HOUSING, SOCIAL
CARE, POLICE, PRISON,
PROBATION AND VCSE



Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, including Portsmouth and Southampton, is facing a growing but solvable workforce challenge:

the very people who keep our public services running are increasingly unable to afford to live in the communities they serve - often priced out of local housing markets, yet also unable to access social housing.

This widening gap between incomes and housing costs is placing pressure on productivity, public service resilience and local economic stability - issues that cut across all public priorities.

Research^[1] covering around 45,000 NHS staff contracts across Hampshire & Isle of Wight found that 41% of staff are considering relocating because of housing pressures. Half are financially stretched, 30% cannot afford market rents for homes suitable for their households, and around 400

staff are living in conditions where they are experiencing homelessness.

"This represents a distinct housing market failure: key workers earn too much to access social housing in many cases, yet too little to find stable accommodation in the private rental market. Without a stable public sector workforce, investment in local infrastructure, digital systems and service reform cannot deliver improved outcomes for our communities or generate system productivity. Housing needs to be seen as not only a key determinant of health, but also of healthy services" said Patrick Fowler, Associate at Shared Ventures Ltd who leads the programme locally. He continued "the response now being developed across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is focused on how public land can be used more strategically to help close that gap."

PATRICK FOWLER
SPECIALISES IN ACROSS
HOUSING, HEALTH, & LOCAL
AUTHORITY
COLLABORATION



**41% of staff are
considering relocating
because of housing
pressures.**

NHS UPDATE

UNLOCKING KEY WORKER HOUSING ACROSS HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT



Through the Hampshire-wide Land and Assets Board and the One Public Estate-funded Key Worker Housing Sub-Group, public sector partners are collaborating to unlock a pipeline of affordable homes for key workers bringing forward additional land/assets that would ordinarily be sold on the open market - co-ordinating delivery rather than isolated site by site disposals.

With demand modelling evidencing the NHS alone would need around 12,500 below-market rent homes across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight footprint to meet their needs, system partners are mapping surplus and underutilised public land across NHS and wider public estate with a view to leasing land rather than selling it; testing scalable financial delivery models; and engaging investors and delivery partners. This is where local collaboration and national policy alignment need to come together.

“With strong local collaboration already underway there is growing national recognition that current public accounting, planning and funding frameworks can unintentionally constrain strategic use of public land for affordable housing” said Sharon Collins, Director of Shared Ventures Ltd.

[1] Research by Savills in collaboration with Shared Ventures Ltd (2023) - a long-standing partner of the Cabinet Office One Public Estate programme



**LOCAL COLLABORATION
AND NATIONAL POLICY
MUST ALIGN**

Sharon continued “Working alongside Business South has enabled us to engage with the APPG (Central South) where we gained cross-party support from MPs and commitment to influence and champion local site opportunities as well as press for cross-government policy alignment which will unlock affordable housing at scale”.



“For the market, this is a credible and scalable opportunity. The demand is evidenced, public sector partners are building a pipeline of sites, and there is growing recognition that new delivery models will be needed to bring schemes forward at pace. With the right approach to delivery and long-term low-cost investment, key worker housing can provide stable returns while addressing a well-defined gap in the housing market and accelerating local economic growth.”

Contact:

**sharon.collins@sharedventures.co.uk
patrick.fowler@sharedventures.co.uk**

THE MOST EXCITING RACING ON WATER IS RETURNING TO PORTSMOUTH

SAILGP RETURNS TO
PORTSMOUTH ON 25-26 JULY



SailGP marked a month to go until the Emirates Great Britain Sail Grand Prix in Portsmouth at a special event in central London.

Emirates GBR driver Dylan Fletcher and strategist Hannah Mills joined CEO and team principal Sir Ben Ainslie in the capital, as they looked ahead to the flagship race on the south coast, July 25-26, 2026.

They were joined by SailGP's Managing Director Andrew Thompson and Chief Marketing Officer Leah Davis.



Now in its sixth season, SailGP is known as the most exciting racing on water with 13 international teams competing in close-to-shore races, at speeds in excess of 100km/h, across the world.

The Emirates Great Britain Sail Grand Prix, which takes place at Southsea Common, marks the start of the Rolex SailGP Championship's European calendar. The league will then visit Sassnitz in Germany in August, before travelling to Valencia and Geneva in September.

Emirates GBR driver Dylan Fletcher said: "I am absolutely buzzing to come back to Portsmouth. It was an incredible event last year, and this year we want to show our best for all our home fans and bounce off the energy from them.

"As a team we do feel the extra pressure in a home event that we need to deliver a bit more than normal, but I think the whole team really thrives off that pressure and energy, and it really helps fuel us on that start line and around the race course."



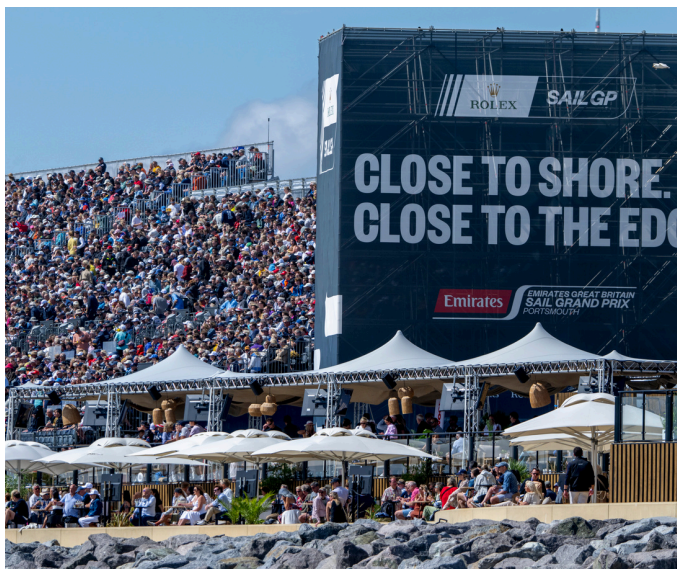
SAILGP

ONE MONTH TO BRITISH SAIL RACING SHOWPIECE

Emirates GBR strategist Hannah Mills said: "I'm so excited to get back to Portsmouth to race. It's such a phenomenal race course, the grandstand is right there on the sea front. Last year we were going round the bottom marks, meters away from the grandstand. You can hear the crowd, you can sense them, it's very special.

"We want to show our sport in the greatest light and for anyone coming down and watching it will be an incredible day out. Hopefully we put on a good show and give you lots to cheer about, there's nothing like seeing the F50s racing in real life."

SailGP managing director Andrew Thompson said: "It's great to be here to mark a month to go to the Emirates Great Britain Sail Grand Prix. The British event is one of the most important in our calendar from a championship perspective – kicking off an incredible summer series in Europe."



"Portsmouth is one of the first races teams, supporters and partners look for in the calendar. We're very pleased to be a part of the Great British summer of sport – bringing world-class competition on water, nothing else comes close."

"Last year, the city really embraced SailGP and we're looking forward to returning in a few weeks' time, with even more opportunities to get involved. Pack the waterfront, fill the restaurants, jump on the train and make a day of it. SailGP is at its best when the fans really lean in – and the British crowd know how to do that."

The inaugural Emirates Great Britain Sail Grand Prix | Portsmouth last July was the first hosted by Portsmouth, with a sold out crowd of more than 20,000 spectators enjoying a weekend of racing and entertainment.

Along with the most exciting racing on water, this year racegoers will again enjoy world class food and drinks and the best in entertainment. Pop sensation Jess Glynne will headline Saturday's Après-Sail line up and legendary singer-songwriter Craig David will close the weekend on Sunday with his TS5 show.

For more information and tickets, visit [SAILGP](https://www.sailgp.com).



Action Group Roundup

Maritime Transport Action Group

The Maritime and Transport Action Group invited their HR professionals and team leaders to Paris Smith to learn more about the Employment Rights Act and what it means specifically for their sector.

Claire Merritt (Paris Smith) and Debbie Reed (Red Funnel) led the session, providing an overview of the Act's development and implementation timeline before examining key changes relating to employment contracts, unfair dismissal rights, probationary periods, fixed-term contracts, trade union reforms, and third-party harassment.

the next MTAG Action Group meeting will be on 15th July 2026, from 12:00 - 14:00, at the Harbour Hotel.



Energy & Utilities

Our Energy & Utilities South Action Group recently visited Havant Thicket Reservoir, the UK's first new reservoir to be constructed in over 30 years.

Hosted by Eleanor Shipton and Sam Underwood from Southern Water, the session focused on the progress of the project, its role in addressing climate change needs and regional population growth, and the Hampshire Water Transfer & Water Recycling Project, which will help improve water resilience locally.

The next MTAG Action Group meeting will be on 15th July 2026, from 12:00 - 14:00, at the Harbour Hotel.

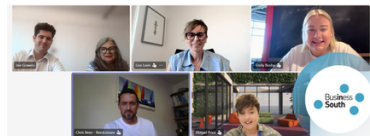


Leisure & Wellbeing

The Leisure & Wellbeing Action Group brings together organisations from across the Central South to champion workplace health, wellbeing and active lifestyles.

Chaired by Chris Rees of ReesLeisure, the inaugural meeting explored practical ways employers can support physical and mental wellbeing, including workplace fitness initiatives, wellbeing activities and the development of a network of workplace Health Champions.

Chaired by Chris Rees (ReesLeisure), the next Leisure & Wellbeing Action Group Meeting will meet on 1st October 2026, from 14:00 - 16:00, at Marwell Zoo.



Action Group Roundup

People South

We are pleased to announce that Darren Tibble is the new Chair of People South. Darren is a Partner and Head of Employment at Dutton Gregory Solicitors and has 25 years' experience as an employment law specialist. He advises on all aspects of both contentious and non-contentious employment law.

At its latest meeting, the group explored changes to apprenticeship funding and skills reforms, and heard about an innovative approach to annual leave that promotes sustainable travel.

The next People South Action Group meeting is scheduled for 16th September 2026, between 10:00 - 11:00 on Teams.



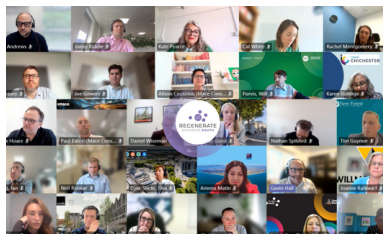
Regenerate South

The Regenerate South Action Group meeting focused on development progress across the Central South and the work being undertaken to unlock stalled sites.

Tim Guymer from New Forest District Council provided an update on the New Forest Waterside programme.

Amena Matin from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council shared the local authority's approach to unlocking stalled development sites.

The next Regenerate South Action Group meeting will be held on 19th August 2026, 10:00 - 11:00, on Teams.



Social Value

Business South has launched a new group dedicated to championing social value across the Central South.

The group will focus on embedding social value into decision-making and development, guided by four key pillars: environmental stewardship, responsible business, a fairer economy, and cohesive communities.

In the session, we appointed the co-chairs: Laura Read, CEO of Marwell Zoo, and Ben Silsby of Willmott Dixon.

The next Social Value meeting will be on 2nd July 2026, from 14:00 - 15:00, on Teams.



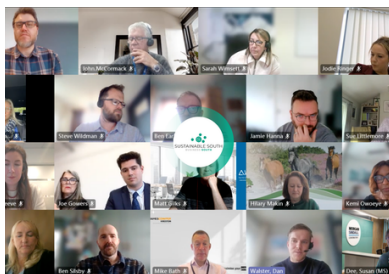
Action Group Roundup

Sustainable South

Ben Earl from Abri and Kemi Owoeye from Willmott Dixon joined the Sustainable South group to share case studies on how they are implementing Natural Health in their development projects.

Ben shared insights from Abri's work on the Mansbridge Estate retrofit project in Southampton, and Kemi presented on how Willmott Dixon integrates natural health into its new developments.

The next Housing Group Meeting will be on 1st July 2026, from 14:00 - 16:00 at Halnaker Hill Farm



Housing Group

Business South's Housing Group met at Chilworth Manor to explore the future skills needs of the industry, one of the biggest challenges facing the housing and construction sector.

Housing Group Co-Chair Matt Turpin of VIVID welcomed attendees and introduced speakers who provided perspectives from both industry and education on how the sector can tackle growing skills shortages.

We were joined by Alasdair Reisner, Head of Preconstruction and Productivity Advisory at Mace, who outlined the scale of the skills challenge across the Central South.

Sarah Warren, Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality at City of Portsmouth College, who presented about how the college is helping to build the workforce for the housing sector, their role in addressing the skills gaps, and the barriers their students face after education.

The college supports around 1,000 construction learners each year, including more than 500 full-time students and 400 apprentices.

The next Housing Group Meeting will be on 9th September 2026, from 15:00 - 16:00 on TEAMS.



To join one of our Action Groups, please email Joe@businesssouth.org.

SKILLS & TRAINING

WHY YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT SHOULD MATTER TO ALL OF US IN BUSINESS - ESPECIALLY HERE IN THE SOLENT

JODI FAIR, REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PARTNERSHIP MANAGER AT SOLENT GROWTH PARTNERSHIP, EXPLORES WHY YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT MATTERS TO EVERY BUSINESS – NOT JUST AS A SOCIAL CHALLENGE, BUT AS A GROWTH ISSUE FOR OUR REGION.

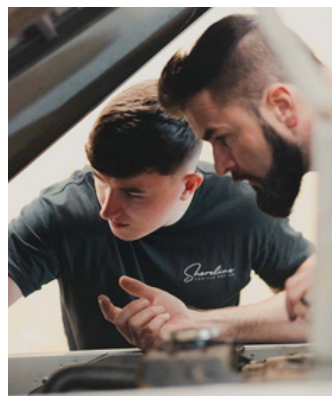


Jodi Fair - Regional Growth & Partnerships Manager

Drawing on her experience working closely with employers, Jodi highlights how supporting young people into work is key to building a stronger, more resilient local economy. She brings a clear, no-nonsense perspective on the role businesses can play – whether that's developing skills, creating opportunities, or helping shape future talent.

I was at the Eat the Island event last week when a local business owner said something that really stuck with me: they wanted to employ a young person, but the cost felt almost the same as bringing in someone with more experience. And honestly, I could completely understand why that felt like such a hard call. For many businesses, especially smaller ones, it probably feels like the sensible option. But the more I thought about it, the more I realised just how much that one comment says about where we are right now – and why I think we need to be far more honest about it.

Across the UK, youth unemployment is rising, entry-level opportunities are shrinking, and more young people are falling into the NEET category (Not in Education, Employment or Training). But for me, this is not just a labour market issue or a set of statistics for a report. It is a sign that the route into work is becoming harder, narrower and more confusing for too many young people – and I think that should concern all of us, especially if we care about the long-term health of our local economy.



The national picture is shifting – and not in the right direction

Recent data shows that over 1 million young people aged 16–24 are now NEET, representing 13.5% of that age group—the highest level seen in over a decade. At the same time:

- Youth unemployment is sitting at around 14–16%
- Economic inactivity is at record highs

Job vacancies have dropped significantly, now around 705,000 UK-wide.

Put simply, more young people are available for work, but there are fewer opportunities to step into.

SKILLS & TRAINING

What this looks like on the ground in the Solent?

In the Solent, we're seeing these trends play out in real time – and if I'm honest, I find that deeply frustrating, because the talent is there, the ambition is there, but the route in often just isn't. We have:

- Young people who are struggling to access meaningful, paid work
- Businesses telling us they can't find the right people
- Employers holding back on hiring due to cost and risk

To me, this is the kind of disconnect we should have stopped accepting a long time ago.

Through our work with local businesses, colleges and partners, the message is consistent: the system connecting young people to jobs is under strain.

The disappearing first rung on the ladder

Entry-level roles have always been the bridge between education and work. But that bridge is narrowing. Data shows:

Entry-level hiring is down 14% year-on-year, with the majority of roles declining

Automation and AI are increasingly reshaping junior roles

Competition for early-career roles is at record highs

Locally, that translates into fewer apprenticeships, fewer trainee roles, and less willingness to take on someone who needs time to develop.

For young people, it means fewer chances to get started.

For businesses, it means fewer opportunities to build future talent from the ground up.



The hiring paradox: when entry-level isn't 'low cost' anymore

A key issue we're hearing from businesses across the Solent is this:

"It costs almost the same to hire a young person as it does someone with experience."

While the sources don't quantify exact cost comparisons, they do confirm that rising employment costs, including wages, National Insurance and wider employment obligations are making hiring decisions more difficult, particularly for entry-level roles. This creates a difficult reality for employers:

- Wage increases and higher employment costs raise the baseline cost of hiring
- Entry-level hires often require more supervision, training, and time to reach productivity
- For SMEs in particular, this increases perceived risk

So businesses make what is, on the face of it, a logical decision: if the cost feels similar, they go for experience. I do understand that. But I also think we have to acknowledge what that means in practice: we are gradually removing the first step on the ladder, then acting surprised when young people struggle to climb it.

The result?

- Young people are locked out of the labour market
- Businesses lose their future talent pipeline
- The skills gap continues to widen

Continued...

**SOLENT
GROWTH
PARTNERSHIP**

SKILLS & TRAINING

WHY YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT SHOULD MATTER TO ALL OF US IN BUSINESS - ESPECIALLY HERE IN THE SOLENT

The mismatch problem still at the heart of it

Even with rising youth unemployment, businesses continue to report:

- Difficulty finding candidates with the right skills
- Gaps in communication, problem-solving, and workplace readiness
- A lack of practical, work-based experience

At the same time, young people are telling us:

- They don't know how to access opportunities
- They lack the experience employers are asking for
- Apprenticeships and training routes can feel fragmented or hard to navigate

This isn't just about jobs – it's about alignment.



Why businesses really need to pay attention?

For me, this is not a short-term challenge we can just keep working around. It is a long-term risk to the Solent economy, and the longer we leave it, the harder it will be to fix.

1. A weakening talent pipeline. If fewer young people enter the workforce today, the future workforce shrinks. That impacts succession planning, growth, and sector resilience.
2. Higher recruitment costs in the future. Without developing early talent, businesses become more reliant on experienced hires, which are both scarcer and more expensive.
3. Persistent skills shortages. Despite high youth unemployment, around two-thirds of UK firms still report skills shortages. This tells us clearly it's not just a supply issue – it's a system issue.
4. Reduced local growth potential. When young people aren't earning, they're not contributing to the local economy. That impacts demand, growth and business confidence.



YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IS RISING, ENTRY-LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES ARE SHRINKING, AND MORE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FALLING INTO THE NEET CATEGORY

SKILLS & TRAINING

WHY YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT SHOULD MATTER TO ALL OF US IN BUSINESS - ESPECIALLY HERE IN THE SOLENT

So where do we go from here?

If I'm honest, I don't think there's a silver bullet here – and I'm always a bit wary when people pretend there is. But I do think there are practical things we can do, and we need a lot more realism, urgency and joined-up thinking than we've had so far.

For Businesses:

Create realistic entry pathways, even small-scale ones
Work with training providers to shape skills, not just recruit them
Consider potential and attitude, not just experience

For the system (and where partnerships matter):

Better alignment between education and employer needs
More joined-up support for young people navigating into work
Continued use of incentives and programmes to reduce the cost/risk for employers

We're already seeing positive steps nationally, with investment in youth employment programmes, apprenticeships and hiring incentives designed to reduce that risk for employers
But locally, the real impact will come from how well we connect the dots – between businesses, education providers, and support organisations.



solentgrowthpartnershipinfo@portsmouthcc.gov.uk



HSDC confirmed as the top-performing college in South Hampshire for apprenticeships

HSDC has been confirmed as the top performing Further Education college for Apprenticeships in South Hampshire, following the publication of its 2024/25 Apprenticeship Quality Achievement Rate (QAR).

HSDC achieved an Apprenticeship QAR of 67.10%, outperforming the national average of 65.4%, and sitting significantly above the average performance of colleges across Portsmouth and the surrounding areas. This result reinforces HSDC's position as a regional leader in high-quality, employer-led education and training.

This achievement reflects the College's future careers-first approach, ensuring that every apprentice is supported to not only achieve their qualification, but to progress into meaningful employment, higher-level training, or sustained career pathways.

[Read more >](#)

YOUTH JOBS GRANT

£3,000 FOR EVERY ELIGIBLE YOUNG
PERSON THEY HIRED

Further information about the Youth Jobs Grant

From Tuesday, 30th June, businesses in Southampton can access the government's new Youth Jobs Grant. This will pay £3,000 for every eligible young person you hire.

The Youth Jobs Grant is worth £3,000 for every young person a business hires aged 18 to 24 who has been on UC and looking for work for six months. The first payment of £1,800 is made after six weeks, followed by a second payment of £1,200 after 18 weeks, provided grant conditions are met

It's easy for businesses and employers to apply. You simply complete a straightforward online application form and receive funding in two instalments, once employment and earnings have been verified. Find out more and apply [HERE](#).

University of Southampton delighted to appoint new Vice- Chancellor

The University of Southampton has announced the appointment of Professor Charlie Jeffery CBE as its next Vice-Chancellor and President.

Professor Jeffery is currently Vice-Chancellor at the University of York, a role he has served with purpose and distinction since 2019.

A highly respected leader in the sector, he brings with him a deep-rooted interest in the role of universities in promoting economic development and in creating opportunities for wider access to education both here in the UK and internationally.

Building on Southampton's global reputation for excellence with real-world impact he will bring a focus on preparing graduates to flourish in a rapidly changing labour market and on harnessing research to the benefit of our economy and society.

At Southampton, he will oversee the creation of a pioneering new Institute for Medical Innovation, bringing together engineers, clinicians and computer scientists to accelerate the discovery of life-changing treatments and technologies. [Read more](#)



Darren Paffey is the Labour Member of Parliament for Southampton Itchen

"I would be particularly pleased to hear from any local businesses that decide to access these grants and would like to offer my help to publicise how they're helping young people to take their first steps into work.

I would encourage them to email me at darren.paffey.mp@parliament.uk so that we can arrange a visit."



**Professor Charlie Jeffery
CBE**

BUILDING THE WORKFORCE BEHIND REGIONAL GROWTH

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
COLLEGE IS HELPING
EMPLOYERS CLOSE THE
CONSTRUCTION SKILLS
GAP THROUGH
COLLABORATION,
INNOVATION AND
INVESTMENT IN FUTURE
TALENT

NAOMI BEER - BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE,
CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
COLLEGE



The cranes across the South's skyline tell a story of growth, but behind every new housing development, commercial building and infrastructure project lies a challenge facing the entire construction industry.

Who will build the future?

With an ageing workforce, increasing demand and ambitious Government plans to deliver more homes and infrastructure, the need for skilled construction professionals has never been greater. The solution isn't simply recruiting harder - it's developing talent.



At City of Portsmouth College's North Harbour Campus, we work with **hundreds of construction apprentices** and employers across the region to build the workforce that the industry needs today and for years to come. From Bricklaying and Carpentry to Electrical Installation, Plumbing, Gas Engineering, Painting & Decorating, Property Maintenance and Refrigeration, our apprentices gain practical experience in industry-standard workshops while developing the professionalism and technical skills employers value most.

Our approach is simple: education should be shaped by industry.

That's why we work closely with organisations including the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, Hampshire Construction Training Association (HCTA), Hampshire Refrigeration Society, Shaping Portsmouth, local authorities and employers to ensure our training reflects the realities of today's construction sector. As technologies evolve and sustainable building practices become increasingly important, our curriculum evolves alongside them.



BUILDING THE WORKFORCE BEHIND REGIONAL GROWTH



At City of Portsmouth College, we're proud to play our part - but we can't do it alone.

If your business is looking to strengthen its workforce, develop future talent or explore how apprenticeships could support your organisation, we'd welcome the opportunity to start the conversation.



The success of apprenticeships is best demonstrated through the partnerships we build with employers. Companies such as R W Armstrong- who employ over 200 construction workers locally, and specialise in high-end construction & master craftsmanship, bringing extraordinary projects to life across London & the South of England. They continue to invest in future talent, providing apprentices like Musa with the opportunity to develop their skills in real working environments while contributing to live projects. These partnerships do more than simply create qualified tradespeople; they develop confident professionals who add value to businesses from the very start of their careers.

Our commitment extends beyond technical training. Apprentices regularly represent the College in prestigious industry competitions, showcasing their skills on regional and national stages, while our campus welcomes schools, community groups and employers throughout the year for workshops and engagement events designed to inspire the next generation to consider rewarding careers in construction.

The construction skills challenge cannot be solved by colleges alone. It requires employers, industry bodies, local authorities and education providers working together with a shared ambition to strengthen our regional economy.

With Government investment in apprenticeships and skills continuing to grow, there has never been a better time for businesses to invest in developing their own workforce. Apprenticeships provide an opportunity not only to address recruitment challenges but also to nurture loyal, skilled employees who understand your business from day one.



"The construction industry has always been about building for the future, and that future starts with people. Every apprentice represents an investment - not only in a business, but in our communities, our economy and the next generation of skilled professionals. When employers, educators and industry work together, we don't just close skills gaps - we create opportunities that last a lifetime." Naomi Beer - Business Development Executive, City of Portsmouth College



BUSINESS LUNCH

KATE PEARCE, HEAD OF STRATEGY AT BUSINESS SOUTH SITS DOWN FOR AN ALFRESCO BUSINESS LUNCH WITH VANESSA GOOD, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, SCAPE.



It's always great to find out a bit more about my guest and it was fascinating to hear more about Vanessa's career path which has seen her have a successful career in graphic design and marketing, prior to developing her current role with Scape building relationships with key stakeholders across the region and identifying opportunities to collaborate.

With temperatures steadily rising, an al fresco business lunch seemed in order – and where better to sit in the shade than at the idyllic Balmer Lawn Hotel in Brockenhurst.

When we held our recent Directors Dinner at the Balmer Lawn, we were lucky enough to be able to sit outside before being called to dinner and the terrace really is a special spot.

It was lovely to be greeted by hotel owner Alison Wilson, who made us feel most welcome and showed us to her favourite place on the terrace.

The last time Vanessa and I caught up was at UKREiIF in Leeds, where our promotion of the Central South region kicked off with a panel session on the Scape stage. We've been planning a business lunch catch-up for some time and on the eve of our Regenerate Central South Annual Conference, our calendars finally aligned.



We opted for a light lunch option, with Vanessa choosing a feta cheese wrap with pomegranate molasses, pickled red onion and tzatziki and I went for Sumac Hummus and flat bread with a side order of delicious queen green olives.

BUSINESS LUNCH

ALFRESCO BUSINESS LUNCH WITH VANESSA GOOD



BALMER LAWN
HOTEL & SPA
★★★★

BUSINESS SOUTH CHAMPIONS – EXCLUSIVE AT BALMER LAWN HOTEL & SPA

The team at Balmer Lawn have curated an exclusive set of benefits for Business South champions, designed to give real value across business, wellbeing and social occasions.

To discuss your requirements or check availability, please get in touch with the team on events@blh.co.uk and quote "BIZSOUTH".

Our conversation covered everything from the opportunities across the Central South, our concerns for young people looking to get their careers off the ground and the important role mentoring can play.

Vanessa shared how she was touched by a mentor relationship she recently had with a young girl who showed so much potential and just needed a helping hand.

It was great to understand more about Scape and hear about their Reinvest Fund and how it is helping worthwhile initiatives across the UK. Fingers crossed, a couple of projects in Portsmouth might soon be benefitting – and we will share this news as and when a decision is made.

Vanessa shared she has a passion for salted caramel ice cream so a single scoop and a coffee seemed the perfect way for her to end lunch and I just had to try the rum baba with orange coulis and rum and raisin ice cream.

As we said our farewells, teams were arriving for a cricket match on the pitch opposite the hotel – a quintessentially British scene and we both wished we could linger longer but the office beckoned once more.

Thanks so much for joining me Vanessa ...



If you would like to be my next Business Lunch guest, please drop me an email to kate@businesssouth.org.

CHAMPION NEWS

£1.3BN FOR HAMPSHIRE AND THE SOLENT

£1.3BN INVESTMENT

Hampshire and the Solent has secured a major investment of £1.3 billion with new devolved powers confirmed that will boost the entire region.

[Read more](#)



VIVID CELEBRATES WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION WEEK

VIVID, a leading housing provider and the 6th biggest housebuilder amongst housing associations in England, is celebrating Women in Construction Week 2026 by spotlighting the women driving its major developments forward. > [Read more](#)



NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL STRENGTHENS APPROACH TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

New Forest District Council (NFDC) has approved an updated environmental enforcement policy to strengthen their response to issues such as fly tipping, littering, abandoned vehicles and waste offences.

> [Read more](#)

MDL MARINAS LAUNCHES FUEL-SAVING OFFER FOR BOATERS

MDL Marinas has announced a fuel-saving boost for boaters this spring, giving Otium members 10p off every litre of fuel at MDL fuel stations throughout April.

> [Read more](#)



CHAMPION NEWS



GUNWHARF PLANS TO TRANSFORM ITS WATERFRONT

Gunwharf Quays has unveiled new plans to transform its iconic Waterfront, setting out the next stage of its long-term investment in Portsmouth. The plans come as Gunwharf Quays celebrates its 25th anniversary and reflect its continued commitment to the city and its visitor economy.

> [Read more](#)

COUNTDOWN IS ON TO THE BRITISH SCIENCE FESTIVAL IN SOUTHAMPTON

Europe's longest-running science festival is coming to Southampton, with a whole host of free events, exhibitions, performances and installations for the public to enjoy.

> [Read more](#)



WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR THE 2026 CENTRAL SOUTH BUSINESS AWARDS

> [Read more](#)



SAVILLS COMPLETES SALE AT SITE OF FORMER TELEVISION STUDIOS

The third and final phase of a part-built development on the site of the former Meridian TV studios in Southampton has been sold by Savills in a deal totalling £5 million. > [Read more](#)



INNOVATIVE COMMS SYSTEM WILL SAVE VITAL TIME IN MULTI-AGENCY EMERGENCY RESPONSES

Emergency services will be better able to communicate with each other during an incident as an innovative communications system is rolled out to fire and rescue services (FRS) in England.

> [Read more](#)



CHAMPION NEWS

ABP SOUTHAMPTON MARINE EXCELLENCE ENABLES ARRIVAL OF RECORD BEATING CRANES, FURTHER STRENGTHENING A KEY UK TRADE GATEWAY



Associated British Ports (ABP) has welcomed the first arrival of new huge quay cranes at DP World's container terminal at the Port of Southampton. Enabled by the ABP Southampton Marine team's painstaking preparation and operational excellence, the arrival of the new cranes, the tallest in Europe, mark a significant further step in enhancing the port's capability as a leading global gateway for UK trade. > [Read more](#)

SOUTH DOWNS ALUMNI REACHES MASTERCHEF FINAL

HSDC is proud to celebrate the remarkable achievement of former South Downs student, Luke Emmess, who has reached the final of the BBC's MasterChef:

Luke, who is currently Head Chef at The Wykeham Arms in Winchester, has built an outstanding reputation in the hospitality industry since leaving South Downs. > [Read more](#)



TRANSFORMING FAWLEY FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Fawley Waterside Limited is bringing forward proposals for the redevelopment of the former Fawley Power Station site in the south-eastern corner of the New Forest.

The emerging new vision for the site is for a commercial, employment-led development that maximises its strategic location on the Solent and follows on from the historic energy use. >

[Read more](#)



CHAMPION NEWS

BUSINESS SOUTH CHAMPIONS MEET DOUGLAS: EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF CONSTRUCTION INNOVATION



Business South Champions were invited to witness the future of construction first-hand by meeting Douglas, a humanoid robot currently being trialled by Tilbury Douglas on construction sites across the UK. > [Read more](#)

SOUTHAMPTON SCIENCE PARK DECLARED THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND'S TOP PROPERTY BUSINESS

The University of Southampton Science Park has been named both South Coast Property Business of the Year and Commercial Landlord of the Year 2026, recognising its leadership in supporting innovation-led businesses across the region. > [Read more](#)



NEW AER LINGUS FLIGHT CONNECTING SOUTHAMPTON TO USA

Travellers from Southampton can now fly to Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania through Dublin Airport following Aer Lingus' launch of its latest transatlantic service on Monday. > [Read more](#)



STRONG VISITOR TURNOUT AND MAJOR DEBUTS MARK SUCCESSFUL 2026 SOUTH COAST & GREEN TECH BOAT SHOW > [Read more](#)



SHARE YOUR NEWS

Send your news stories to natalie@businesssouth.org and we will include as many as possible in our newsletters and on social media.

NOVICE NETWORKING AT MARWELL ZOO



**NOVICE NETWORKING -
GOOD CONVERSATIONS,
NEW FACES, AND A
SUPPORTIVE ATMOSPHERE**



We were delighted to host our recent Novice Networking event at Marwell Zoo 🦒

The event brought together a fantastic mix of professionals from across the region, creating a welcoming space for meaningful conversations, new connections, and the sharing of ideas. It was great to see such a positive and engaged atmosphere throughout.

Set within the unique surroundings of Marwell Wildlife, the event offered a refreshing alternative to traditional networking, encouraging attendees to connect in a more relaxed and informal environment.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make the event such a success. It was great to see attendees from a wide range of organisations, and we look forward to continuing to build these connections.



We were also pleased to hear from Laura Read, Chief Executive of Marwell Wildlife, and Helen Freeston, Marketing Director at Paris Smith LLP, who shared their experiences and insights, offering valuable guidance and perspective for those at the early stages of their careers.



CENTRAL SOUTH PROPERTY LUNCH

**CENTRAL SOUTH PROPERTY
LUNCH 2026:**

**PROPERTY, INVESTMENT AND
REGENERATION**

The Central South Property Lunch was a successful afternoon of insight, discussion and connection. Bringing together the region's property, development and investment communities to explore the opportunities shaping the future of the Central South.



And to everyone who joined us at Norton Park and helped make the event such a positive afternoon.



A valuable opportunity to explore the ambitions, strengths and opportunities shaping the future of the Central South. This year, the panel highlighted the importance of inward investment, partnership working and purposeful regeneration.

Thank you to our panel speakers, Stephen Haynes, Paul Clark, Sarah Longthorpe, Krystian Groom, Oliver Sowton, Stuart Harris and Harriet Fear.



MOVING ON UP



COUNCILLOR DAVE PENNY ELECTED AS NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

On Monday (18 May 2026), New Forest District Council (NFDC) held their Annual Council meeting and elected the new Chairman for the coming year as Cllr Dave Penny.

[Read more](#)



TRETHOWANS PROMOTES THREE LAWYERS TO PARTNER AS FIRM CONTINUES STRATEGIC GROWTH

Leading law firm Trethowans has announced the promotion of Bonnie Ward, Dan Clark and Katie Bickerstaff to Partner, marking another significant milestone in the firm's continued growth.

[Read more](#)



LESTER ALDRIDGE ANNOUNCES TWO PARTNER PROMOTIONS

Lester Aldridge is pleased to announce the promotion of Phoebe Chandler and Edward O'Brien from Senior Associate to Partner. Their promotions reflect the firm's continued investment in its people and its commitment to delivering excellent service to clients.

[Read more](#)



Delicia Campbell
Residential Property (Winchester)



Patrick Brennan
Tax & Estate Planning (Winchester)



Claudia Mihai
Corporate (Winchester)



Ryan Mitchell
Commercial (Southampton)



Zoe Culverwell
Family (Bournemouth)

PARIS SMITH LLP ANNOUNCES PROMOTION OF FIVE NEW PARTNERS ACROSS HAMPSHIRE AND DORSET

A celebration of talent and commitment across the firm's Winchester, Bournemouth, and Southampton offices

Paris Smith is delighted to announce the promotion of five outstanding lawyers to Partner from 1 April 2026, reflecting the firm's ongoing commitment to nurturing talent and delivering exceptional client service.

[Read more](#)

EVENTS IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH

SOUTHSEA FOOD FESTIVAL

Southsea Food Festival, in partnership with Hendy, is back on Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 July 2026. [Learn More](#)

SOUTHAMPTON PRIDE

Southampton Pride takes place from the 28th to the 29th of August 2026. This year marks 10 years since it first started back in 2016. [Learn More](#)

BASINGSTOKE FESTIVAL

Celebrate 15 years of creativity and culture at Basingstoke's free outdoor arts Festival. Friday 19 June to Sunday 5 July 2026. [Learn More](#)



BUSINESS SOUTH 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Central South – Shaping Tomorrow Together - [Register online HERE.](#)



LAST WORD

And Finally ...

As I write this we are just a couple of weeks away from celebrating our 20th anniversary. Reaching such a milestone has meant we've had the perfect excuse to reflect on two decades of Business South including the name changes along the way (Business Southampton and Business Solent) as well as our expanding geography.

It's been heartening to hear Champions sharing their thoughts on Business South at 20 and great to catch-up with our founding CEO Sally Thompson and Events Director Shirley Wynne-Jones to reminisce.

More than just a great excuse to have a party, our 20th anniversary underlines the importance of our Champions coming together to promote our region as a brilliant place to live, work, enjoy and do business.

With so much change in the offing (both nationally at No 10 and regionally as a result of devolution and the Local Government Review), it is comforting to know that our focus remains and we will continue to speak up for our region on a national and international stage.
Leigh.



Leigh-Sara Timberlake
Business South Group CEO

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EVENT CALENDAR

8 July 2026

[Directors of the Future Dinner](#)

16 July 2026

[Business South 20th Anniversary Party](#)

5 August 2026

[Novice Networking](#)

16 September 2026

[Business South at London Real Estate Forum](#)

14 October 2026

[Champion Directors Dinner](#)

5 November 2026

[Business South Annual Conference](#)

9 February 2027

[Central South Food & Drink Trade EXPO](#)

15 - 19 March 2027

[MIPIM, Cannes](#)

18 - 20 May 2027

[Central South at UKREiiF](#)

